

Subject: Re: Fellowship**Date:** Tue, 10 Jun 1997 17:40:16 -0700**From:** "Bernard C. Berger"**To:**

wrote:

>
 > Dear Dr. Berger,
 >
 > > Yes we were members #4 and 5 of Roberts group.
 >
 > Hmm. So, it was Bonita first, followed soon by David Guido.
 > Then there was a third person of whom I know nothing. Then
 > you and Elizabeth. Then Meg Gwynne (Stella) and Harold Wirk.
 > Then Bill Schenker? Or did Bill precede you?
 I was with Bill Shenker at an Esalen Style encounter group. He
 mentioned that Burton had some interesting ideas and that we should go
 to a meeting. He was in the group before me. I brought my wife along.
 We share everything together and still do. Shenker was interested in
 Sufism and in the idea that certain people have greater powers than
 others. I suppose that the Castenada Books were out by that time and
 reinforced that concept.
 > The group quickly
 > > increased to perhaps 30. We developed some new friends in the group and
 > > 6 of us left after my wife and I were members for a year.
 >
 > A year. So, you left in the Spring of 1971, prior to the purchase
 > of the Oregon House property.
 >
 > Hmm. Do you mind if I ask you some basic questions about yourself,
 > and then also some basic questions about your perceptions at that
 > time, as you remember them?
 >
 > I have heard you are a physician. May I ask about your field of
 > medical practice, and further, whether you have any training in
 > psychiatry?
 Yes I am a physician now retired and although at that time I was
 interested in Psychiatry I did not take a residency in that field. ALL
 of my circle of friends from Med School became Psychiatrists. I did
 enjoy my practice and spent a lot of time listening to my patients. I
 do not give credence to psychoanalytic theory.
 > May I ask how you were persuaded to begin paying Robert money?
 Robert asked for and received \$100 per month from us. I felt it was
 worth it for his time and effort. He did open my eyes to Gurdjieff's
 concepts. It was not a bad deal for me to pay him.
 > How would you describe the Robert Burton whom you knew at that time?
 He was a v. good teacher of the idea of being awake. He was also v.
 weird. His eyes always seemed to be remarkable. Very wide eyed but I
 was not uncomfortable with him. He really had a great shtick and did
 very well for himself. I also enjoyed the members. They were middle
 class, affluent and searching for something. Just like me. It was a
 hell of a lot simpler than trying to climb Everest.
 > Do you recall Robert ever discussing his personal life, i.e.,
 > where he grew up? I know that he was born in Arkansas, and
 > that he later moved to California, attended San Jose State
 > University, taught fourth grade in Lafayette. Did he ever say
 > where he went to high school? Do you have any idea how he
 > was keeping afloat financially prior to his requiring payments
 > of you?
 I believe that he lived with his mother and taught tennis.
 > > Robert wanted
 > > us to give him a sizable but non specific amount to purchase a ranch.
 >
 > Yes. This became an institution, a dogma, a rite of passage. When
 > I was a member ..., the "ranch donation" (one donation among
 > many) was "one month's gross income, or \$1000, whichever was greater."

>
> > It seemed like a very exploitative request and thus left the group.
>
> Yes, it sounds like you had some basic common sense. I presume you have
> some concept of the group's subsequent history?
>
> Oh, yes, another question. In reviewing the roster of members during the
> early years, I continue to be astonished at the number of physicians.
> Have you any notion of how this came about?
Physicians seem more glib than real people. They may fool others that
they know something but in their hearts they seek and have the money and
time to fulfill themselves. I just finished the Everest Book Into Thin
Air, There was a high percentage of Drs on that expedition. Drs are
also poor investors and are an easy mark.
> > I would be happy to answer any questions.
>
> I am grateful for your response and am very interested in whatever you are
> able to remember from this remote time. Is it possible that you or your
> wife have notes tucked away, somewhere?
No notes I am sorry
> > Best Regards
> > Bernard Berger
>
> Sincerely,